Central National Technology Support Center

FY 06 Summary Report — October 2006

Director's Message

Ron Williams, Director

At the Central National Technology Support Center (CNTSC), we are privileged to be a part of the technology support infrastructure for the agency. We are pleased that your requests for our assistance continue to increase. We received 660 requests for direct technical assistance/ support and completed 80 percent of those requests during Fiscal Year (FY) 2006.

Our CNTSC specialists are committed to providing national leadership for a number of key science and technology areas. You will see some of these areas highlighted in this report.

During FY 2006, we developed a keener ability to focus on our functions, which serve as the framework for decision making. The functions of the NTSCs are to:

- Provide direct technical support to States and the Caribbean and Pacific Basin Areas;
- Acquire and develop new science and technology;
- Develop and maintain national technical standards, references, and related procedures;
- Build partnerships and collaborate to provide training; and
- Support national activities.

In supporting the States, we are committed to ensuring that we provide you with high quality technical support and assistance that is relevant to meeting your needs.

Thanks for the opportunity to serve you. We look forward to working with each of you to meet the many science and technology challenges that face our agency during FY 2007.

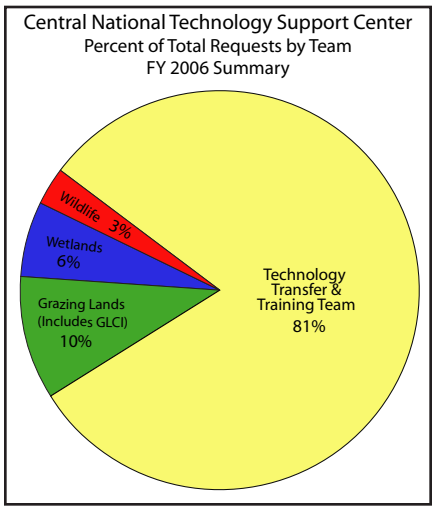
Ronald C. Williams

RONALD C. WILLIAMS
Director

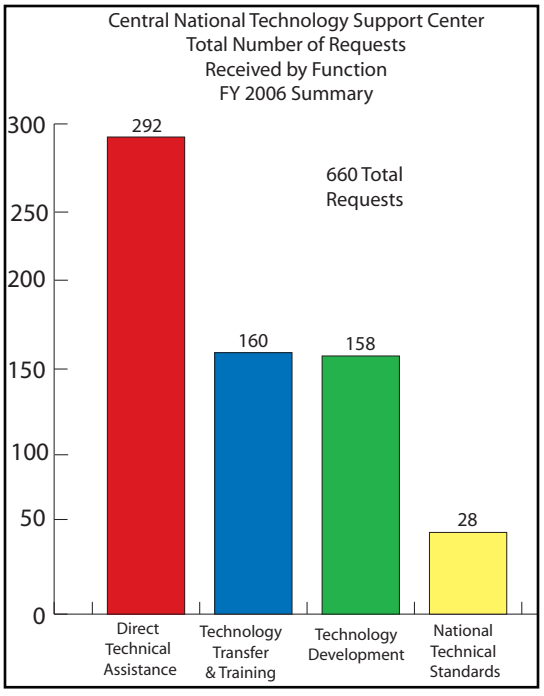
Central National Technology Support Center

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
501 West Felix, Building 23
Fort Worth, Texas 76115
Phone - 817-509-3328
Fax - 817-509-3336
www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/ntsc/central/

Helping People Help the Land



Graphic 1.1



Graphic 1.2 - This includes the Technology Development Teams and the Technology Transfer and Assistance Team.

Technology Transfer & Assistance Team

Conservation Boot Camp

During FY 06, CNTSC staff completed 33 requests, totaling 1575 hours of work supporting six national Conservation Boot Camps held nationwide. This assistance totaled 5% of the completed requests, and 6% of the time for completed tasks.

Boot Camp is designed to show participants how the Agency and its conservation partners work together to conserve, maintain, and improve natural resources while meeting our customers' needs.

Steve Brady, CNTSC wildlife biologist (left) provides training at Conservation Boot Camp. Participants also receive instruction and on-site experience with soils (below right) and range and pasture management (below left).

Ecological Site Description Workshop for Foresters

In September, the CNTSC sponsored an ecological site description (ESD) workshop to introduce foresters to procedures, data collection and potential uses for ESDs.

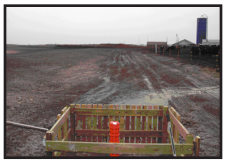
Policy and procedures for the development of ecological sites, based on the National Forestry Manual and the Pasture and Range Handbook were covered in a classroom setting. An interdisciplinary team of foresters, grassland specialists and soil scientists led the group in the field, where procedures for ecological site data collection were explained and practiced. This gave the group an overview of different levels of data collection and the merits of the different field data procedures.

The Missouri Department of Conservation also participated in the workshop and presented their perspective on the value and use of ecological sites. Partners like this agency are extremely valuable to the NRCS as we begin the implementation of ecological sites for conservation planning interpretation.

Team Activities for FY 06

Technology Transfer & Assistance Team members were very busy during the CNTSC's second year. Some highlights from Team activities in FY 06 are:

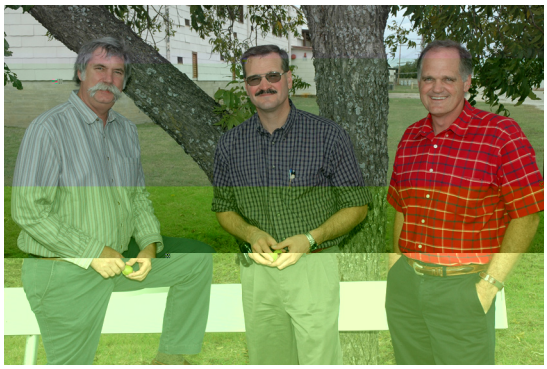
- Developed and conducted a series of Conservation Practice Standards Writing Workshops for state office discipline specialists.
- Held regular State Resource Conservationist Workgroup Netconferences on various topics, including CNMP's and CSG's, WinPST and GSAT. Also reviewed State and local assistance tools and introduced the Small Farm information sheets.



- Reviewed Engineering Design Criteria for settling basin design in conjunction with new Conservation Practice Standards.
- Coordinated multi-agency, pilot Salinity Management for Soil and Water training course.
- Conducted Soil Data Viewer 5.0 Pilot Training with NTSC soil scientists, GIS specialists and State soil scientists.
- Hosted an interdisciplinary Ecological Site Description Workshop to identify opportunities to improve the existing process.
- Assisted planning engineers in Iowa develop a computer model for analyzing municipal reservoir water budgets to determine if the site can provide a dependable water supply.
- Developed and launched WinPond, a computer program which helps engineers, conservationists and technicians design ponds and other structures.

- Provided Rangeland NRI Diagnostics and Data Valadation training for collection procedures and quality.
- Developed an Environmental Management System for Manhattan, Kansas, Plant Materials Center.
- Supported "Bridging-the Headgate" partnership, which emphasizes voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs.
- Staff provided technical assistance to state of Louisiana in Hurricane Katrina cleanup efforts.

Wetland Team



Wetland Team (l to r): Norman Melvin, Team Leader, Rich Weber, wetland hydraulic engineer, and Lee Davis, wetland biologist.

In FY 06, the Wetland team has been active in wetland training, participating in a wetland Restoration and Enhancement course in Iowa, a Wetland Plant ID course in West Virginia, and an Advanced Wetland Plant ID course in South Carolina. The team is currently developing a series of Wetland Identification and Delineation courses, which is the NRCS equivalent to the Corps of Engineer's Reg IV course. The team is also developing a Swampbuster Regulation course which will be available in FY 07.

The team has developed several technical notes, including *"Noxious, Invasive, and Problem Plant Species,"* which provides information on the invasive species issue in wetland restoration. It contains specific information, including control methods, for 13 different species that adversely impact wetlands. An invasive species module has also been developed and used in Boot Camp.

Another technical note, *"Wetland Indicator Status Designations,"* provides specific information for identification of wetland plant species that are taxonomic trinomials and have variable indicators when used in the determination of hydrophytic vegetation as part of the overall wetland identification and delineation process.

Grazing Lands Team

Grazing Lands Team (l to r): Homer Sanchez, rangeland management specialist, George Peacock, Team Leader, and Dr. Kenneth Spaeth, rangeland management specialist.

The Grazing Lands Team provided assistance in developing a National Resources Inventory/Forest Inventory and Assessment Integration pilot project. The pilot is designed to develop an interagency, integrated strategy between NRCS, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management to address short- and long-term survey sampling approaches for the Nation's rangelands. A presentation on Hydrology, Erosion, Plant, and Soil Interrelationships after Rangeland Wildfire was made at the International Conference on Hydrology and Ecology in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic. Assistance was provided in development, coordination, and delivery of the rangeland and pastureland component of the six Boot Camps.

A State and Transition Ecological Theory Development Workshop, co-sponsored with Oregon State University, was held at Oregon State University. The workshop involved selected NRCS grazing lands specialists and scientists, researchers, professors from universities, and the Agricultural Research Service. This Workshop was designed to allow the research and scientific community to understand how NRCS is using the State and Transition models in the description of ecological sites, in management recommendations to producers, and to understand NRCS needs in the refinement of theory concepts.

Wildlife Team

Wildlife team members served on a panel to review Fish and Wildlife Conservation Grants submitted for funding to the Agricultural Wildlife Conservation Center in Madison, Mississippi. As a result, USDA awarded $1.6 million in competitive grants in 2006 to 12 recipients that will develop and evaluate technological tools for fish and wildlife habitat improvements.

The team participated in a workshop in Portland, Oregon, to revise the Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP). The original version of SVAP was released in 1998 to assess the condition of on-farm stream resources and it is currently used (in part) to determine producer eligibility for the Conservation Security Program (CSP). Revisions were made to improve its accuracy and repeatability and plans for field testing and validation have been made for fiscal year 2007.

The team also participated in a National Headquarters meeting to analyze state CSP fish and wildlife assessments and make recommendations to achieve greater program consistency. The team is working with NHQ Programs Division, States, and other National Technology Support Centers in developing technical criteria to improve fish and wildlife assessments for future sign-ups.

Additionally, the team developed a variety of technical notes, news articles, and special publications.